DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 320 727 RC 017 577

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TITLE Multicultural Implications for Teachers.
PUB DATE 20 Oct 89
NOTE 31p.; Paper presented at the Joint Meeting of the Montana Education Association and the Montana Council for Exceptional Children (Great Falls, MT, October 20, 1989).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Information Analyses (070)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS American Indian Education; *American Indians; Bilingualism; Cultural Awareness; Cultural Background; *Cultural Differences; Cultural Pluralism; Elementary Secondary Education; Ethnic Distribution; *Hispanic Americans; *Multicultural Education; Population Trends; *Racial Differences; Racial Distribution; Sociocultural Patterns
IDENTIFIERS *Montana

ABSTRACT

This paper describes several differences between Anglo American children and their Hispanic and American Indian counterparts. The growth of the U.S. ethnic population is described, along with some implications for policymakers and educators in Montana and other affected states. According to census figures, the population of American Indians increased by more than one million people between 1950 and 1980. There is a greater proportion of young people within the American Indian population than within the U.S. population as a whole. Similarly, the average age of Hispanics is relatively low and is expected to remain so for some time. As an educational goal, assimilation of these minorities into White American culture has failed. Assimilation has, therefore, been replaced with a focus on cultural diversity and multiculturalism. Montana has 12 American Indian tribes whose members represent about 6% of the state population. A significant Hispanic population also lives in Montana. While bilingual programs make a great deal of sense in this situation, few such programs exist in this state. Similarities between Hispanic and American Indian communities in terms of cultural traits, extended family structure, and English language-learning are described. Educators are called upon to develop greater awareness of and sensitivity to cultural and linguistic differences. This paper contains 23 references. (TES)

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ED320727

Multicultural Implications for Teachers

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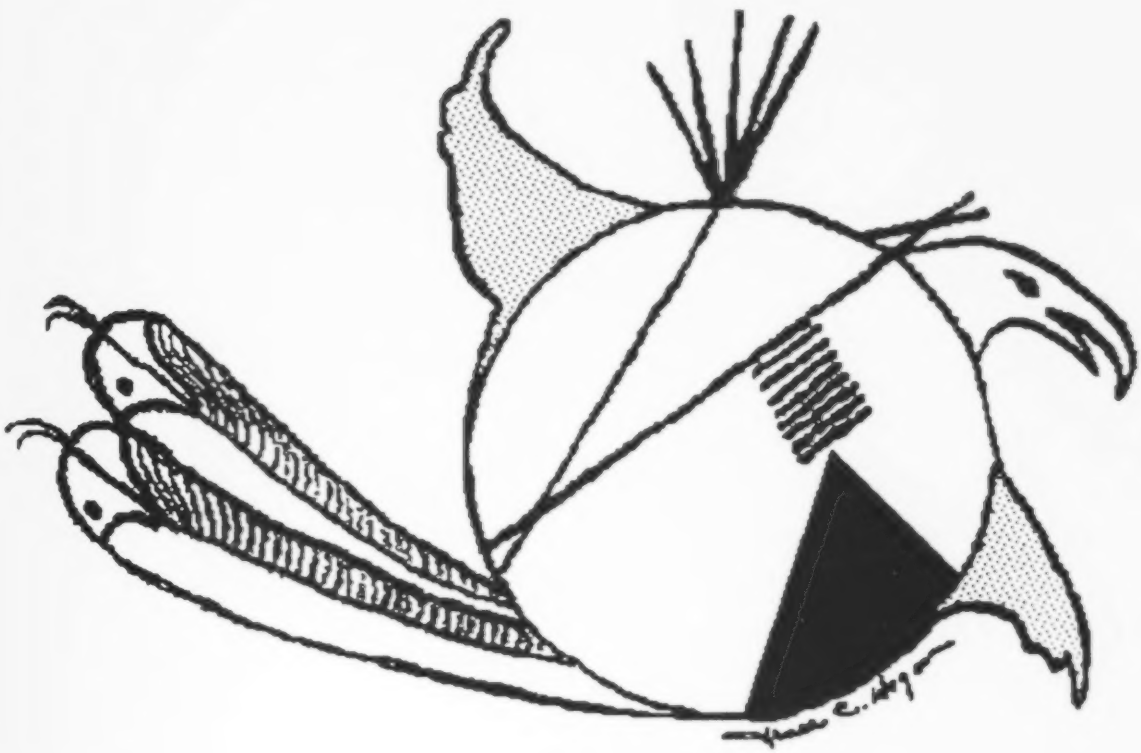

A Presentation at MEA-CEC
Great Falls, Montana
October 20, 1989

EC017577

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Abstract

Some of the population changes which are changing the ethnic proportions in the United States are presented, with implications for Montana andother similar states. Examples and implications for teachers are described.

Artist Acknowledgment

The cover design is the work of Lance Hogan, A Crow and Commanche Indian person, who is a senior at Eastern Montana College.

The population in the United States is changing rapidly. Not only is the average age increasing to create a greater number of mature persons, but the complexion is changing as well. The population is becoming less white - or at least less frequently white.

Let's look at some of the ethnic trends in the United States today. Cultural pluralism and racial diversity are greater today than at any other time in the country's 213 years (Aramburo, 1989). By the year 2020, the population of school-age children, ages five to 17, will be 48% ethnic minority.

The United States is a haven for two-thirds of the world's immigrants. The top eight countries of origin of legal immigrants are: Mexico, the Phillipines, Vietnam, Korea, India, People's Republic of China, Dominican Republic, and Jamaica. Aramburo (1989) reported that minorities comprise at least 25% of the total school population in 13 states and at least 35% in six states. She indicated the nation's 25 largest school systems already have a majority minority population. During the 1988-89 school year, California became the first state to have a majority minority population.

While freedom of religion has been protected

constitutionally in the United States, which has helped perpetuate religious diversity, the policies and practices regarding language and other cultural differences have not been as accepting. However, language differences remain. For example, Glazer and Moynihan (1963) reported that in 1660 the Dutch governor of New Netherland had said that there were 18 languages spoken near Fort Amsterdam at the tip of Manhattan Island. Three hundred years later there were at least as many languages spoken there.

At one time assimilation was viewed as the appropriate way to deal with minority group members. It was a belief in the need for assimilation, which prompted white men to take American Indian children to boarding schools. There, the young Indian children were often forbidden to speak their own language, frequently being punished if caught conversing in their own language, even among themselves. Those practices had devastating effects. Some American Indian groups have literally lost their own language. Not only that, there is evidence that permitting persons to develop their first language sufficiently enhances their ability to learn a second language (Cummins, 1979). The practice of bannning the use of the American Indian languages assured a group of English speaking persons, but with less verbal facility than they would have had if they

had been permitted to retain their own language before learning the English language.

Additionally, despite attempts to assimilate American Indians, much of American Indian cultures has survived. Indeed there seems to be a resurgence in interest in American Indian cultures and an attempt to revive and maintain cultural practices of the past.

While Montana does not exactly mirror the rest of the nation, history suggests that what happens elsewhere in the nation also happens in Montana. We believe that will be true of the ethnic population as well. Within Montana, the largest minority is the American Indian tribes followed by the Hispanics. We will respect the Montana differences by presenting information first about American Indians, then Hispanics, followed by Blacks.

American Indians

According to the 1980 Census figures, about one half of the Indian population lived in the West (Bureau of the Census, 1988). Rather than being vanishing Americans, American Indians increased by more than one million persons between 1950 and 1980. About 500 American Indian tribes and bands were identified in the

1980 census. There were two tribes -Cherokees and Navajos - with more than 100,000 persons - a greater number than any city in Montana. Only the Navajo Reservation had a population of more than 100,000, but the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana is among the ten Reservations with the largest number of American Indians.

Youthful

As a group there are greater proportions of young American Indians than there are among the population as a whole. In 1980, about two thirds of American Indian families had children under eighteen years of age compared to one-half for all families.

Educational Attainment

Educational attainment levels are considerably lower for American Indians compared to the total population - with only slightly more than half the persons aged 25 and older having completed four or more years of high school. In 1980, 56% of the 691,000 Indians over the age of 25 had completed four years of high school. Eight percent of Indians, compared to 16% of the total population, completed four or more years of college. Some experts are now saying that the educational needs

of Native American children are different from other students in spite of the commonalities between them and other poor minority youngsters ("The Quest for Cultural Identity",1989).

Language

American Indians are reported to have had more than two hundred fifty different languages (Locke, Pfeiffer, Ridley, Simon, & Whiteman, 1977). There is extreme variability throughout the nation with respect to the frequency of use of the various tribal languages. Some have disappeared, while others have remained and adapted to the language requirements of the twentieth century.

Income

Anybody who lives in Montana must be aware of the poverty among American Indian groups. Nationally, 45% of the total Indian population residing on reservations lived below the poverty rate in 1979. The Blackfeet Reservation in Montana had the lowest percentage (39%) of American Indians in poverty - still a high percentage.

Hispanics

When the 1980 Census was taken, it was the first time everyone was asked to indicate if they were Hispanic, and when necessary, persons were permitted to answer questions in Spanish (Bureau of the Censuus, 1985). The 1980 Census revealed that 4.5% of the total population is Hispanic. A more recent report is that the nation is presently 8.2% Hispanic ("Hispanic population," 1989).In 1980, nearly two-thirds of the nation's Hispanics lived in California, New York, and Texas. The population was more than 10% Hispanic in five states : New Mexico (37%), Texas (21%), California (19%), Arizona (16%), and Colorado (12%). Of the Hispanic groups, the Mexican Americans show the most dramatic increase - nearly doubling from 4.5 million in 1970 to 8.7 million in 1980. However, there was generally a large increase in Hispanics in the United States between 1970 and 1980. Persons of Mexican origin increased by 93%, while persons of Cuban origin increased by 47%, persons of Puerto Rican origin increased by 41%, and persons of other Hispanic origins increased by 19%.

Youthful

The Hispanic population is comparatively young - the median age in 1980 being 23.2 compared to the median age of 30 for the entire population. Both the high

immigration rate, including women of childbearing age, and the high fertility rate suggest the Hispanic population will remain young. The 1980 census figures showed that there were proportionately more preschool children in Hispanic families than other families.

Educational Attainment

In 1980, only 44% of Hispanics over the age of 25 had high school diplomas compared to 66% nationally - 40% of the Hispanics did not go beyond the eighth grade. The median number of school years completed for Hispanic women was 10.5 and 11 for Hispanic men in 1980.

Language

One of every 20 Americans spoke Spanish at home according to the 1980 census. About 1/4 of those spoke English poorly or not at all.

Income

Nearly three of every 10 Hispanics were below the poverty level in 1982 - more than twice the rate of whites. The income of Hispanics was higher than blacks. Incomes of Hispanic persons rose but because of inflation there was less buying power than in 1969.

Hispanics in Montana

We have heard about one Hispanic family in Eastern Montana, whose primary language was Spanish, having been told to take their children home and not to bring them back until they spoke English. We believe that has changed, but one could only guess the miniscule number of teachers there might be in Montana who speak fluent Spanish. Yet if one visits in Hispanic homes in Billings, Montana in 1989, it is certainly possible to find the language of preference is Spanish. This is similar to the barrios of large southwestern and other cities; a great many Mexican customs, beliefs, and certainly the Spanish language have survived. This is also true of the Hispanic communities of the northeast and the southeast, but the customs, beliefs, and language are those of Cubans or Puerto Ricans. In Montana, Nicaraguans, Columbians, and Panamanians among others are arriving to live, work, and go to school.

Blacks

In 1989, (Bureau of the Census, 1980), there were 26.5 million Blacks in the United States, making up about 12% of the population. That makes Blacks the

second largest racial group in the United States (Bureau of the Census, 1986). More Blacks live in metropolitan areas than other areas. Needless to say, none of the 50 cities with the largest Black population is in Montana or Wyoming.

Youthful

The fertility rate is high among Blacks. Family sizes are larger than for whites as well. While life expectancy is less (about 6 years) than for whites, it has increased - to an average of 69 years in 1982.

Educational Attainment

The dropout rates from high school for Blacks was 12% in 1983. Seventy nine percent compared to 87% for whites graduated from high school. Blacks represented about 10% of the total college population between the ages of 18 and 34 in 1983 with Black women outnumbering Black men.

Language

While Blacks speak English almost exclusively, many speak sub-standard or Black English. This means that there are dialects in Black ghettoes which may be

difficult for white teachers to comprehend.

Income

The poverty rate for Blacks in 1984 was 33.8% while the poverty rate for Whites was 11.5%. About 2.1 million of all Black families had incomes below the poverty level in 1984.

Cultural Diversity

Let's dispense with that part of the discussion and conclude that assimilation is an unsuccessful practice. If you have drawn that conclusion, we are left with multiculturalism or culturalpluralism. That is, we must accept cultural diversity and permit persons to maintain their own culture, if they like, while also learning how to function within the majority culture.

There has been concern about overrepresentation in special education of minority groups (e.g., Chinn & Hughes, 1987). While there are a number of reasons why there could be a higher incidence of disabilities among minority groups (e.g. otitis media among Indian groups, high drug and alcohol abuse among some minority groups), it has been suggested (Latham, 1984) that American Indians have been overidentified as learning disabled.

Indeed, O'Connell (1987) reported that a greater percentage of American Indians than any other group has been identified as learning disabled. Dodd & Nelson (1989) pointed out the need for studies of American Indians with learning disabilities and that, at present, it is necessary to extrapolate from studies of other groups, but also suggested there should be proportionately as many persons with learning disabilities within minority groups as among the general population.

Dodd and Ostwald (1989) reported there are no appropriate tests of intelligence for all American Indian groups because of the diversity between tribes and reservations. They also pointed out that it is not financially feasible to spend time and money developing as many tests as would be needed for the cultures represented among persons called American Indians. Therefore, it seems reasonable that teachers and other school personnel must familiarize themselves with the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the populations with whom they work in order to help reduce overreferral and possible overidentification of minority children as having learning disabilities or other disabilities. Let's start by examining the make-up of the state of Montana.

American Indians in Montana

Montana is the fourth largest state, but its population of 790,000 persons spread over the 145,392 square miles ranks it 41 in population with an average of five persons per square mile. There are seven American Indian reservations and 12 tribes widely dispersed throughout the state, representing about 6% of the population (See map appended). The Blackfeet reservation in northwestern Montana contains 1.5 million acres, while the Flathead reservation, also in northwestern Montana, contains 1.2 million acres and is shared by the Salish and Kootenai tribes. In north central Montana the Rocky Boy's reservation of 108,015 acres is shared by the Chippewa and Cree tribes, while the Fort Belknap reservation of slightly more than 600,000 acres is shared by the Gros Ventres and Assiniboines. In the northeastern part of the state, the Fort Peck reservation of 2 million acres was established for the Assiniboine and several Sioux bands. In the south central part of the state the Crow tribe occupies the Crow reservation of 2.3 million acres, and adjacent to the east, the Northern Cheyennes occupy their reservation of 445, 000 acres. In addition to the reservations, many American Indians live throughout the

state. The Chippewa-Cree Indians in Great Falls have been described as the landless Indians.

There are both American Indian speakers and English speakers on all the reservations. The Crow language is more frequently spoken than other American Indian languages. Therefore, there are more bilingual persons among the Crows than other tribes. Because of frequent intermarriages between tribes, many persons have grown up speaking only English. Other American Indian language speakers have not taught their children the Indian language.

While it is not as easy to describe the distribution of other minority groups in Montana, there are clearly sizable numbers of Hispanics in parts of Montana. We believe both Hispanics and American Indians as well as other minority groups should receive recognition and acceptance of their cultural and linguistic differences.

The remainder of the presentation is concerned with some examples of cultural and linguistic differences of Hispanics and American Indians which we believe should be considered in teaching or referring the youngsters for special education services.

A number of writers have cautioned that American Indians do not represent a single group and that there is no appropriate stereotype for all groups (Bearcrane, Dodd, Nelson, & Ostwald, in press; Locke et al., 1977). Similarly, Hispanics are a diverse group ranging from the Cubans frequently located in southeastern United States, to the Puerto Ricans often found in New York City, to the Mexicans in the Southwest, as well as Hispanics in smaller numbers from other parts of the world. Dodd, Nelson, and Peralez (1989) also recognized differences which may exist between Hispanics in large barrios in metropolitan areas and those who are in more rural and isolated areas of the country. However, we would like to point out some of the characteristics which seem to recur among a variety of settings and tribes or origins.

Language

American Indian Children

While American Indian children may have excellent English language skills, many American Indian children exhibit language differences which may present problems in school settings (Dodd, Nelson, Heidenreich, and Jacobsen, 1989). The youngsters range from children whose first language is their tribal language to

youngsters who are exclusively English speakers but whose language is not standard English. The differences stem from tribal language speakers who taught their children the less well-developed language -English - to parents of two tribes whose common language was their weaker language, English, which they taught their children. Additionally the isolation of reservations contributes to the development of language differences. Children may engage in code switching, using some words from the elder's language, some words from the tribal language altered by time, and expediency, some from "reservation English", and some from standard English, in effect, forming new dialects. There are also some words that are understood on reservations and intertribally which represent a different English than schools use. This means the children may not communicate well with their English speaking peers, teachers, or American Indian elders.

Hispanics

Similarly, Hispanic children may arrive at school with Spanish as their first and, sometimes, only language or they may use "Spanglish" - a phenomenon similar to reservation English (Dodd,Nelson, Peralez,1989). They, too, may engage in code switching. While they may be bilingual, they may have to translate

from English to Spanish and then back to English for a response. They may also be children whose parents taught them English although it was the parents' second and less well developed language.

Implications

While American Indian or Hispanic children may have no difficulty with language, teachers should anticipate language differences and be prepared to deal with those differences. Bilingual programs make a great deal of sense. They are programs which use the first language for initial instruction and to build on for teaching English. However, there are few of these programs in Montana. Bowman (1989) indicated that teachers who work with language-minority children may be unaware of their own understanding of the context and that of the children they teach. When the teachers do not share common experiences and beliefs, they are less able to help children encode their thoughts in language. She pointed out the importance of beginning instruction with content that is familiar to the children. Spending a great deal of time on language activities throughout the day and in every subject makes sense. This means that the curriculum emphasizes language arts activities. With this procedure, youngsters may catch up with others in their English usage. The use of a greater "wait" time

permits more minority group youngsters to participate. That simply means that the teacher learns to wait, without evidence of impatience, while the youngster either does the necessary translating or thinking before responding. Teachers can also do more showing and less telling throughout the curricular activities and school day.

Community

American Indians

It has been reported (Hynd & Garcia, 1979) that Indian people are judged by their contribution to the group rather than individual accomplishments. Little Soldier (1989) pointed out the idea of personal property may be foreign to American Indian children, and they are accustomed to sharing whatever they have with many family members. Little Soldier indicated they may enter school more advanced than other children in taking turns, working in groups, and sharing. However, schools are more likely to reinforce individual activity, accomplishment, and competition.

Hispanics

Similarly (Dodd, Nelson, and Peralez, 1989) it has been reported there is a much greater sense of community

among Hispanics. Often, the barrrio is a source of identification pride, and shame. Ownership is not emphasized, and indeed, there may be little to own in large families without much income. Sharing is culturally valued, but it is also a necessity.

Implications

In one study of American Indian learning preferences in Montana, it was reported that all preferences were present, but that more American Indians would appear to like to work and learn through small group discussion in a non-competitive atmosphere where knowledge and interpretations are shared (Walker, Dodd, & Bigelow, 1989). Little Soldier (1989) also pointed out that American Indian children's locus of control is internal, and they may be unaccustomed to viewing adults as authorities who impose their views on the children. They are accustomed to the respect for individual rights which is characteristic of American Indians, and children are afforded the same respect.

Both Hispanic and American Indian children, because of their more communal sharing background may be uncomfortable when singled out to provide a correct response especially if the wrong answer has been provided by another youngster. Teachers who capitalize

on their cooperativeness to encourage children to work in groups and also to demonstrate their accomplishments through collective activities are likely to have greater success.

Time

American Indians

The majority society is clock dominated with exact beginnings and endings for everything from the time arithmetic or recess starts to television programming and commercial transportation. In contrast, Little Soldier (1989) reported American Indians view time as a continuum with no real beginning or end. While they are generally patient they are not clock watchers - with an emphasis on living in the present. Tasks may be started anytime and completed whenever the preparations and activities are finished or interest ends. Unexpected events may alter the starting time or intervene in its completion.

This difference in attitude toward time which children experience has an effect on American Indian childen. Burd, Dodd, Grassl, and Smith (1981) compared American Indian children from one reservation in Montana to other children on the ability to make functional time estimates. They reported that the American Indian

children could not make functional time estimates as well as non-Indian children. Similarly, Anderson, Burd, Dodd, and Kelker (1980) investigated the time estimation abilities of American Indian adolescents and found that they were unable to estimate the amount of time to complete activities shown in pictures as well as their non-Indian counterparts.

Hispanics

Dodd, Nelson, and Peralez (1989) reported that among Mexican Americans time waits for everyone. The attitude toward time is relaxed with acceptance of the fact that intervening activities may alter a starting and finishing time. Tourists in Mexico are sometimes confused when an appointment made the previous day is not kept. However, lots of things can come up to interfere with an appointed time.

Implications

Children may need to be taught that the use of time is viewed differently at school than it is at home. Care must be taken to avoid giving the impression that attitudes toward time at home are wrong - just different. Teachers must remember that children may not even be aware that there is an exact beginning and

ending time for activities. Prompts -such as where the hands on the clock will be when the activity is to be completed may be necessary. It may be necessary to show children how much time mush be used each day over a period of several days or weeks in order to complete long-term projects.

Extended Family

American Indians

One of the strongest facets of traditional American Indian cultures is the extended family. Ideally, tribal and family welfare are considered more important than individual welfare. The family system is such that children may be reared by grandparents, aunts, uncles or even good friends. When children are reared by someone other than the parents, it is not always a reflection of inability to provide care for the child. It certainly does not necessarily mean there is a lack of emotional attachment. Rather, it may reflect the close family and friendship ties between the parents and custodial adult. The arrangement is a symbol of trust and relationship so great that it even includes child rearing (Bearcrane, Dodd, Nelson, and Ostwald, in press).

The Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA) was passed by Congress. The ICWA recognized that some Indian

children are neglected and abused just as are some other children. When such is the case or American Indian children need to be removed from their homes for other reasons, according to the ICWA, the first preference for placement must be within the extended family, while the next placement is with the tribe itself.

Hispanics

Dodd, Nelson, and Peralez (1989) pointed out that Hispanics, too, have an extended family system. Youngsters learn that the family is more important than the individual, and identity may be derived from the family's good name. Therefore protecting the family name is very important. Additionally, grandparents, uncles and aunts, or other relatives and friends are responsible for sharing child rearing and play important roles on important occasions. Older siblings must be responsible for younger ones and an aunt would certainly be expected to care for children if the occasion arises.

Implications

Either Hispanic or American Indian children may miss school because of family responsibilities or the need to pay respect which might not be true of their Anglo counterparts. Other family members may be the

responsible person who will deal with the schools. This can be viewed as a strength because it is a part of what keeps the ethnic groups intact. It is essential that teachers recognize the system, accept it and work with it.

Conclusions

We have cited a few differences between American Indian children, Mexican American children, and their Anglo counterparts. There are many. We have also cited evidence to indicate it will be necessary for all teachers to become teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse children. Overidentification and placement in classes for disabled children is intolerable, but underidentification is equally unacceptable. We believe that sensitivity to cultura linguistic differences, and acceptance of the worth of all cultures are essential for teachers. Teacher training programs can address the need generally but, we believe it is up to teachers to get to know and understand the cultures of the children they teach.

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